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SOCIOLOGY IN NORMAL SCHOOLS

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The readers of this article should know that the writer is not a professional sociologist. My academic training was in the other social sciences—in economics as a major, and in political science and history as minors. After becoming a teacher in a normal school I took up sociology, first for the help it might give to the other branches, and later to teach it in a tentative way to small classes of selected students. In this way I have come to see some possibilities in it for the training of teachers.

These possibilities will be treated here only with reference to the normal schools, and particularly the state normal schools of the Northwest, since it is with these that the writer is best acquainted. The teachers' colleges in connection with the universities meet this question in quite a different way: if they consider sociology necessary for the would-be teacher, they may require it for entrance or include it in the studies to be selected out of the hundreds already offered in other departments. The normal schools, on the other hand, usually exist apart from other institutions, and receive their students from the high schools or elementary schools in which sociology is not taught. So if they consider sociology necessary, they must include it in their own curricula.

The usual curriculum in these state normal schools requires two years' work of the high-school graduate. The student whose academic attainments are less than those of the high-school graduate enters the "elementary course" of the normal school. The normal student in his senior year is therefore of the same rank as the college sophomore. This curriculum, however, is not universal. Some normal schools have only the elementary course, and on the other side some have a four-year

course for high-school graduates and grant the Bachelor's degree. These variations also are omitted from consideration here. The usual two-year course has for its particular function the training of teachers for the grades in the elementary schools of the cities and villages. This means that the bulk of the students are women. It also means that if they study sociology it is not at all with a view to teaching it but simply to equip them for teaching in general.

For the facts in regard to the existing position of sociology in the normal schools, I first used the article by Mr. Bernard in the issue of this *Journal* for last September. He states in the article that he sent his questionnaire to 129 state normal schools and received replies from 26 which teach sociology. I have found enough more to raise the number to 40, and my returns are still far from complete. Most of these schools are in the north-central and northwestern states. Outside of this region there are three in Massachusetts, and one each in New York, Virginia, Kentucky, Georgia, Florida, Missouri, Oklahoma, California, and Colorado.

The earliest introduction of sociology into a normal school, as given in the table in Mr. Bernard's article, was at Valley City, N.D. This, however, is an error. Professor J. M. Gillette, now of the University of North Dakota, writes me that he introduced sociology at Valley City in 1903. This gives the priority, as far as present information goes, to Minnesota where "social science" was placed by the state board in 1895 in the curriculum prescribed for all of the state normal schools. The school at Winona announced in its catalogue of that year that the course would "acquaint the student with the principles of social and economic science." The teacher was Manfred J. Holmes. This course in the Minnesota normal schools has rarely been called sociology. Sometimes economics or civics has been given to meet the requirement.

The next introduction was at Milwaukee, Wis. Mr. W. H. Cheever, who has taught sociology there the past twelve years, writes as follows:

President L. D. Harvey discussed in faculty meeting the advisability of establishing a course in sociology in connection with this school. It met with cordial support on the part of every member of the faculty so far as I remember. Mr. Harvey administered the course for about two years, following pretty closely Small and Vincent's text. I sat with the classes a greater part of the time and it grew upon me that there was a great field for teachers in this work.

After Mr. Harvey became state superintendent, the work fell to me. I changed the work in some respects, making it more concrete and connected with it frequent visits to places of social interest in the city. My purpose in doing this was to arouse sympathetic interest in the study of those things which were later to come in the field of economics. I tried also to get our students interested in the social centers, playgrounds, etc., in the city and they have always had a prominent part in connection with those things.

The whole purpose of the work has been to make students observing and thoughtful as to the social conditions surrounding their pupils which influence their work so vitally.

I myself had had no special training in sociology when I began this work, beyond the deep interest that I have always felt in these matters.

The interesting thing about this beginning at Milwaukee is that it grew so naturally out of purely pedagogical interests, and not at all out of an interest in sociology *per se*. Here is President Harvey's own account of it:

Answering your inquiry I have to say that the course in sociology organized in the State Normal School in Milwaukee in 1896 grew out of the feeling that some knowledge of society, its development and its problems, and such an interest as might be developed through this study would be of more use to young men and women going out to teach than some of the other things we were teaching. I have never studied sociology in the university or college, but became interested in the subject, in a way, while teaching economics in the Oshkosh Normal School. The study I gave to it was not the close, critical, and intensive study of the university. I never had that opportunity, but my interest grew out of a rather wide reading, starting with economic subjects and developing into a somewhat wider range. That interest was perhaps heightened by the fact that all my life I had been a reader of newspapers and good periodical literature in an attempt to keep abreast with current thought. It was a difficult problem to work out and was not worked out satisfactorily when I left Milwaukee. One of the difficulties grew out of the fact that at that time the literature available for that class of students and adapted to the time we could give to it was fragmentary. Some of the professors did not think it was worth

while to do anything unless we could give a scientific course in sociology such as the university gave. That seemed to me to be entirely out of the question. We got together such books and such fugitive articles as were available, and took the subject as a sort of reading-course—not a very good plan you will doubtless think, but probably the best we could do under the circumstances. The difficulty was to get a man to handle the subject who knew enough about it, and had interest enough in it to find material and to make the subject interesting to the class. Mr. Cheever handled the work while I was there, and I know he succeeded in getting considerable interest on the part of the students.

I have always believed that there should be such a course in our normal schools. Our students need a little outlook in this field. It will make them better men and women, and put them closer in touch with the social problems of the community in which they live. I had not known of any such work being given anywhere outside the university when I attempted to organize it in Milwaukee.

It is usual in the normal schools to treat sociology as an alternative or supplement to economics. In Michigan two out of the five schools offer sociology. The beginning of sociology in the Illinois normal schools was in 1900, at De Kalb, by John A. H. Keith, who is now president of the school at Oshkosh, Wis. It is also taught at Normal, Carbondale, and Macomb. It was formerly taught at Charleston, but has just been replaced by economics. The teacher, Mr. S. E. Thomas, writes: "Experience seemed to show that a course in economics was more valuable than a course in the more general subject of sociology." Of the eight Wisconsin schools only two, Milwaukee and Oshkosh, teach sociology. All teach economics except Oshkosh which dropped it last year.

The big Iowa school at Cedar Falls was about to introduce sociology last spring when the plan was checked by the death of the teacher, Mr. L. W. Parish, in a railroad accident. In the big Kansas school at Emporia sociology is the last of the seven courses in the department of economics. The new man in charge, Dr. Walter R. Smith, is making it more prominent. "I feel," he writes, "that it forms the very best training for teachers." At Peru, Neb., the larger of the two schools in the state, sociology is an elective. President A. O. Thomas, of the other school at Kearney, after explaining why his school cannot teach

sociology, adds: "We believe the subject is a growing one and vastly important, and it will not be long until it will be taken up more generally as a part of the preparation of teachers." The state superintendent, Mr. E. C. Bishop, writes in a similar strain.

In the northern tier of states from Minnesota to the Pacific coast sociology is more prominent than economics. Since 1905 South Dakota has required either economics or sociology for a life certificate. All four of the normal schools offer sociology, and one offers economics as well, considering the two subjects equally important. Sociology is taught in the two normal schools of North Dakota, the one in Montana, and the three in Washington. In Idaho there are two schools. The one at Albion offers economics and considers it more important than sociology. The school at Lewiston offers both subjects but considers sociology the more important. Sociology is also taught at Monmouth, Ore.

Such are the facts of the case. In passing judgment on them the present writer finds that most of his own ideas have been expressed many times before by others. The need, therefore, is to bring them together into a rather formal arrangement, and I shall not hesitate to repeat some commonplaces.

If sociology is the science of society it purports to be it must have something of value for an understanding of the school. In the first place the school itself is a society. A pupil learns more from his fellow-pupils than from the teacher. He reacts upon his environment as a whole, responding each moment to the dominant stimulus. The teacher is only one source of stimuli, and there are a thousand others. The most the teacher can do is to control the environment so that the stimuli coming from it will be of the right kind. Rousseau's ideal of a teacher with one pupil is rarely realized, and even when it is teacher and pupil are *socii*. The teaching process is always and everywhere a social process.

But the school does not exist by itself. Each pupil in the school is a member of numerous other societies: the family, the group of playmates in the neighborhood, the street gang, the

church, the dancing-class, and so on. The teacher herself belongs to many such groups. These outside associations often obtrude their influences upon the school; the skilful teacher will discover them and either convert them into allies of the school or else count them among the forces which are to be neutralized as far as possible.

The school is also influenced by societies which have an entirely different membership from itself: the coterie of mothers, the woman's club, the trade union, the employees of a neighboring factory, the habitués of a saloon or livery stable. These influences, often secret and unfriendly, need to be detected and reckoned with. Finally, there is the community as a whole, the mass of humanity residing in a given territory—the school district, village, or ward—with its original political bond overlaid by innumerable others, and constituting a plexus of social relations surpassing the power of any mind to trace through all their manifestations. But the community is larger than this local political unit. It extends in successively widening areas to township or city, county, state, and nation. Out of this community the school grows as a differentiated part, a social organ drawing support from the whole and controlled in a large way by it. In this community the children when grown up must find their respective positions for industrial, political, cultural, and recreational activity.

It follows from all of this that the science of the school and of the teaching-process must be a social science. Now sociology attempts to discover the general principles which run through all social institutions; it claims for itself the position of master science in the group of social sciences. Then sociology may become basal to the science of teaching. This is the way the situation appears on its face when approached from a certain direction—that of the sociologist.

To many practical teachers, on the other hand, the situation appears very different. The most general knowledge also seems the most useless, and the high generality of sociology fits it to keep company with metaphysics. Many minds, as every teacher knows, seem unable to handle generalities in any other way than

to learn them by rote. Even the most scientific of us, the psychologists say, think in terms of concrete images more than we ordinarily suppose. The teacher who is a genius *feels* the social situation and instinctively *does* the right thing; even the passably good teacher must have some feeling of that kind. And then a generalized truth is no guide by itself; there must also be apprehension of the particular situation before even the simplest rule can be applied. Teaching is an art to be acquired by practice. Again, the grade teachers have no need of the philosophy and science of education. That is only for principals, supervisors, and superintendents who have to determine policies.

Between these two extreme views every normal school must effect a compromise. For the born teacher the normal school may not be able to do much. Geniuses of all kinds get little direct benefit from schools. The function of the normal school is to make teachers out of the young people who come with capacities of all kinds and degrees. Aside from requiring a knowledge of the branches they may have to teach, the normal school seeks to give them, or develop in them, these three things: (1) a philosophy of education—some conception of the aim and function of the teacher's work; (2) the science of education—an understanding of the materials and forces which the teacher has to handle; and (3) the art of teaching—facility in doing the routine work which the teacher has to do.

Though philosophy of education is not often formally announced among courses of study, there is plenty of evidence that the normal schools believe in it. Every worker in every walk of life down to the humblest toiler in mine or factory has some conception of the aim and function of his work, some mental attitude toward it; and what that attitude is goes far to determine the quality of the product. No schools lay greater emphasis on developing the right attitude than do the normal schools; hear the president of one of them talk for five minutes and the thought will come out. But philosophies nowadays are treated with scant respect unless they are founded on science. Philosophies of education are related to philosophies of society,

and like them should find their foundation in the social sciences. Before we can define the aim of education, or the function of the school, or the duty of the teachers, we must have a theory or conception of society, either expressed or implied; and this should square with the results of all the social sciences which sociology tries to bring together in generalized form.

That the normal schools believe in teaching the science of education appears on a mere glance at their courses of study. Pedagogy and theory of teaching are the titles under which it most often appears. Generalized knowledge in the form of science has been the chief factor in the industrial revolution of the last century and a half. All the arts are now being revolutionized, and the art of teaching is no exception. The normal schools are sifting all that science has discovered about the child and the teaching-process to select that which will help the teachers. Most normal schools also teach history of education so as to enable each student to do some sifting for himself.

The pure science which the normal schools rely on the most as the foundation for their science of education is psychology. They usually require at least a semester of it, and employ their ablest teachers for it. From a scientific point of view it is the backbone of the normal-school curriculum. But psychology is the science of mind, and mind exists only in the individual, while the school is a social institution and teaching is a social process. Though we use such terms as "social mind," "public opinion," "national sentiment," "spirit of the age," and there are real things corresponding to these terms, the terms themselves are figurative; the things they designate are not really mental but only certain phenomena in the behavior of masses of people. The psychologist, it is true, studies the operations of mind under the stimulus of communication from other individuals. But that wave-like progress of communication through a mass of individuals, though based on the operation of individual minds, is a phenomenon of another order; it is a social phenomenon with laws of its own. These laws have been unfolded to our view during the past quarter-century, first by some sociologists on the continent of Europe—Tarde, Le Bon, Gumplowicz, and

Ratzenhofer—and then by the Americans—Ward, Giddings, Ross, Small, Sidis, and Cooley.

The thought of the last seven paragraphs may be summed up in syllogistic form as follows: (1) The normal schools try to give their students a scientific knowledge of the school and the teaching-process to serve as a foundation for the art and philosophy of teaching. (2) The school is a society, and is linked in with other societies in the community; the teaching-process is always a social process. (3) Sociology, the science which treats of social institutions and processes, would serve the purpose of the normal schools as much as the psychology they already teach.

But another link is necessary in this chain of reasoning. As stated above, the conclusion implies a third premise, namely, that sociology really is the science which it purports to be. This is not the place to discuss the denials which have been given to this assumption, first by the economists, then by the historians, and more recently by the political scientists. The present writer will not venture a direct answer. But his experience as a teacher of sociology may throw some light on the question and perhaps be more directly useful for the purposes of this article.

In the first place I find plenty of interest in the subject—perhaps greater than students in another kind of school would show, because normal-school students see that it is the study of the very things they must handle as teachers. Economics is an equally interesting study to boys, but to girls it is not; their experience of industrial life is too limited, and they do not look forward to playing an active part in it. In sociology, on the other hand, outside of the economic and political phases, girls are fully equal to the boys in the richness of their experience and the keenness of their expectations.

Then there is the alleged lack of definiteness in the scope of sociology and of agreement respecting its fundamental principles. Last year, in selecting topics and references, I went through much of the literature of sociology which seemed available for the use of students. The lack of agreement in both these respects was much less than I had expected. In fact the

disagreement was not notably greater in sociology than I had previously found it to be in economics. This experience led me to the conclusion that there is as high a degree of definiteness in the fundamentals of sociology as it is wholesome to have in any growing science. My correspondence with normal-school presidents shows that they do not shy at the scientific character of sociology. They are no more purists in science than in etymology; they do not question the possibility of a science of society any more than they question the legitimacy of the word sociology. They almost unanimously admit the importance of sociology. Their questions are these: (1) Can normal-school students grasp sociology? (2) How can room be made for it in the curriculum?

The literature of sociology, however, is at present imperfectly adapted to school use. There are only half a dozen usable textbooks in existence. Though each possesses some excellent qualities and the later ones show improvement, there are still promising methods of arrangement and presentation for which the equipment does not exist. The good textbook, I suppose, is never made off-hand; it is rather the result of a long evolution, the survivor of many failures. So the school that introduces sociology now should expect to introduce a new textbook every year; the school must also have a teacher who is able to organize the subject without a textbook, and then give him time enough to reorganize it often. It is much the same with the standard works to which the students must be sent for collateral reading. Agreement on a simple but adequate terminology, sloughing off the unnecessary technicalities, development of the successive topics so that each seems to grow naturally and inevitably out of its predecessor and all combine to build up a great central thought—these achievements are yet to come in sociology. They have come in certain parts of it, but the classical treatise which does this for the subject as a whole has not yet appeared. Let us hope, however, that it is now being written. That treatise need not be superior to existing works in scientific character; I have already admitted that there seems to be reasonable agreement among sociologists as to fundamentals.

The need is rather pedagogical and literary, which means that the arrangement and expression must everywhere be clear, free from obscurities, readily understandable—both in its parts and as a whole. Meanwhile any class of young students who are put into sociology must have a skilful pilot, or else they can apply to themselves every day the legend which one of my students inscribed on the cover of her notebook: “We’re floundering again!”

The position sociology is ultimately to hold in the normal schools is as yet undetermined. So far the normal schools have only experimented with sociology. In Minnesota where it is required in all the schools the results are not entirely satisfactory, and the schools differ widely among themselves in their method of handling it. Elsewhere its present position as an elective, as an alternative to economics or a supplement to civics, is a good one for testing its possibilities; but as a permanent arrangement it would seem to me anomalous. There is danger that interest in sociology may be on account of its merely sensational features—to peer into the pathological and the curious—as is sometimes the case with elementary physiology; the origins of society have as much food for morbid curiosity as the origins of life. No, I believe sociology will go either one way or the other; we must either throw it out altogether as a dangerous fad, or else give it a place at the center of the curriculum such as psychology now occupies.

This makes the crucial problem the *modus vivendi* to be established with psychology and the curriculum as a whole. Shall psychology be crowded into one-half the time now given to it? Shall the arithmetic, geography, and history make a place for sociology? Shall the pedagogy and practice-teaching be cut down a semester? Shall history of education vacate in favor of sociology? Or finally, shall sociology be given by the psychologist as an addendum to his course, or shall psychology be abolished as a separate study and handled by the sociologist as an introduction to his course? It looks a little as if the choice might be between this last pair of alternatives. If it should there is no doubt that for a time at least the

psychologist will hold the ground. But the sociologist may win in the end. Sociology presupposes psychology (Peace to Professor Sumner's ashes!), while psychology does not presuppose sociology. The disposition of psychologists now is to limit their science to the general principles of psychical life, and leave the numerous applications of those principles to go under other names. Therefore the sociologist may be expected to be the better equipped of the two for the dual rôle. The sudden development of "social psychology" just now is facilitating some such arrangement as this. The books that have appeared under this title, however, are sociology rather than psychology.

My psychological colleague, Dr. Maurice H. Small, disapproves of the foregoing paragraph. The true foundation of education, he says, is neither psychological nor sociological, but biological. The individual springs from a single cell, subject to the law of multiplication and differentiation, and of organization in systematic colonies. This genetic development divides into two parts, the psychological and the sociological. This may all be true, but the normal school must decide whether to have one teacher, or two, or three, to lay this bifurcated foundation.

What kind of sociology will the normal schools teach? In Bernard's article there are returns about methods from twenty schools. The practical method receives large emphasis in nine, moderate in four, small in one, and is not mentioned by six. Theory receives large emphasis in one, moderate in three, small in two, and is excluded in three, while eleven make no mention of it. There are also returns for the psychological, statistical, and historical methods. But none of these returns signify much, for the subject is too intricate to be answered in a single word. Some teachers are known to emphasize observation of neighborhood conditions, to take classes on visits to factories, social settlements, prisons, etc., and the writer has found a little use of that method helpful. One thing, however, is certain. If sociology is to attain the prominent place in the normal-school curriculum which is marked out for it above, it will be as a closely-knit science and not as a course of excursions and stereopticon lectures. Like the psychology taught today it will consist of the maximum of theory, i.e., all that the students

can take in and assimilate, with the minimum of descriptive matter necessary to make the theory go down. The justification for sociology in the normal schools, if there be any at all, is that the principles of society are the foundation of the principles of teaching. The practical applications should be only incidental to the development of the principles, or should be left for the courses in pedagogy.

The idea of some teachers of sociology that students under twenty are lacking in the concrete knowledge of society necessary for the study of theory seems to me to be founded on a misconception. If the teacher will use the knowledge of society which the students have, and not look for what they do not have, he will find sufficient background for his theory.

The outcome of the work of the committee appointed by the American Sociological Society to standardize the beginning course in sociology for the colleges and universities of the country will have a bearing on the position sociology is to take in the normal schools. Many students who graduate at the normal schools subsequently go to the university. Here in Wisconsin, for instance, it is arranged that normal-school graduates may enter the university as juniors. Then if Sociology 1 in the university consists of a general view of the subject, somewhat like Economics 1, normal graduates can have credit for it when they go to the university, but otherwise there would be some trouble about the articulation.

The final outcome will also depend in part on what the high schools do with sociology. Some disposition exists to introduce it there. President Harvey believes in it, and there are some textbooks designed to that end. But the normal schools cannot ask their students to repeat courses which they have already pursued successfully in the high school.

The only word of advice the writer feels like urging is to go slowly. No one can yet say fairly that every normal school must teach sociology in order to be "onto its job." Everything is still in the experimental stage. The outcome cannot now be foreseen. Many adjustments remain to be made before we can proceed with assurance. But developments are under way and it behooves us to watch them.